

Message Text

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ACTION SS-25

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FM AMEMBASSY TEHRAN
TO SECSTATE WASHDC PRIORITY 8196
INFO AMEMBASSY KABUL PRIORITY
AMEMBASSY MOSCOW PRIORITY
AMEMBASSY ISLAMABAD PRIORITY

C O N F I D E N T I A L TEHRAN 04355

EXDIS

E.O. 11652: GDS
TAGS: PGOV, PEPR, IR, AF, PK, UR
SUBJ: AUDIENCE WITH SHAH

1. WHEN I TOOK SECRETARY OF THE ARMY ALEXANDER TO CALL ON THE SHAH MORNING OF MAY 8, I FOUND HIM TIRED AND DEPRESSED, ALMOST LISTLESS. THIS IS THE FIRST TIME I HAVE SEEN HIM SINCE THE EVENTS IN AFGHANISTAN AND THAT SITUATION, ESPECIALLY THE LOSS OF LIFE AMONG THE MOHAMADZAI FAMILY, MAY HAVE BEEN THE CAUSE OF HIS DEPRESSION. ALTERNATIVELY, IT COULD MERELY HAVE BEEN THE FACT THAT HE IS RECOVERING FROM A COLD AND HAD A LAME LEG WHICH SEEMS TO HAVE RESULTED FROM A WATER-SKIING MISHAP.

2. THE SHAH DID NOT DWELL ON THE EVENTS IN AFGHANISTAN AS MUCH AS I HAD EXPECTED, MERELY CONFINING HIMSELF TO THE STATEMENT THAT THE COUP HAD COME "FIVE YEARS" EARLIER THAN HE EXPECTED, BECAUSE HE HAD THOUGHT THE COMMUNISTS WOULD WAIT UNTIL DAOUD HAD PASSED PEACEFULLY FROM THE SCENE. HE EXPRESSED CONCERN ABOUT MOSCOW'S INTENTIONS IN THE REGION. THE FOCUS OF HIS CONCERN IS THE PUSHTOON-BALUCHISTAN REGION OF WESTERN PAKISTAN. HE FEELS THE ECONOMIC AND
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POLITICAL DISARRAY IN PAKISTAN IS VERY TEMPTING TO THE SOVIETS AND THAT THEY MAY MOVE RAPIDLY TO EXPLOIT IT.

3. HE SAID HE WOULD MEET AGHA SHAHI THAT SAME AFTERNOON. HE WAS SURE HE WOULD BE ASKED FOR "MORE LOANS". HE SAID IT WAS OBVIOUS PAKISTAN NEEDED HELP BUT ADMITTED CANDIDLY THAT HE WAS "HESITATING" BECAUSE HE DIDN'T LIKE "CERTAIN THINGS

THEY ARE DOING". I SAID OUR ABILITY TO HELP WAS HANDICAPPED BY PAKISTANI INSISTENCE ON THEIR REPROCESSING PLANT. HE GAVE HIS USUAL DISSERTATION ON THE STUPIDITY OF THIS PLANT.

4. HE THEN TURNED TO THE DOMESTIC SITUATION IN IRAN AND ADMITTED THAT HE WAS DISCOURAGED AND FRUSTRATED. HE FELT THE ISLAMIC LEADERS WERE PLAYING INTO THE HANDS OF THE COMMUNISTS. HE COULD NOT UNDERSTAND WHY THERE WERE YOUNG, EDUCATED PEOPLE WHO SEEMED TO PREFER THE COMMUNIST SYSTEM TO THE CURRENT SYSTEM IN IRAN. HE SAID "EITHER WE ARE DOING SOMETHING WRONG, OR ELSE THEY ARE ALL CRAZY. BUT THERE ARE SO MANY OF THEM. CAN SO MANY ALL BE CRAZY?"

5. COMMENT: THIS IS THE FIRST TIME I HAVE HEARD SHAH EXPRESS THE VIEW THAT THERE MAY BE SOMETHING FUNDAMENTALLY WRONG WITH HIS SYSTEM AND HIS "GAME PLAN". HE USUALLY HAS A FEISTY ASSURANCE THAT HIS SYSTEM WILL PROVE RIGHT AND THAT THE "HANDFUL" OF OPPOSITIONISTS WILL BE REJECTED BY "THE PEOPLE". THE PAST FEW DAYS WHICH HE HAS SPENT IN SOME SOLITUDE AT KISH RECOVERING FROM A COLD AND THE EVENTS IN AFGHANISTAN AS WELL AS THE CONTINUING MINOR DISTURBANCES THROUGHOUT THE COUNTRY AND ESPECIALLY ON THE CAMPUSES SEEM TO HAVE SOBERED HIM AND GIVEN HIM SOME PHILOSOPHICAL UNCERTAINTIES. THIS MAY BE ONLY A MOMENTARY LAPSE FROM HIS USUAL SELF-CONFIDENCE, BUT IT WAS CONSPICUOUS ENOUGH TO BE WORTH NOTING.
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